

Being Fruitful: Practicing Extravagant Generosity

Study/Reflection sheet for Week 5: Nov. 21, 2010

What You'll need: A Bible; A Copy of the book **Five Practices of Fruitful Living** (available at the Maritime Christian Book Room); A Pen; And 15 minutes a day!

What You'll need to do: Read these passages aloud. Take the time to look them up and place them into context. Then spend a minute or two reflecting on what you've read: write down your thoughts if you need to; ask questions of the text – or of yourself and current practice; then let these thoughts percolate through your mind or heart for the rest of the day.

Reflection Texts:

"Honour the LORD with your substance and with the first fruits of all your produce." (Proverbs 3:9)

"Will anyone rob God? Yet you are robbing me! But you say, 'How are we robbing you? In your tithes and offerings! You are cursed with a curse, for you are robbing me...! Bring the full tithe into the storehouse ...and put me to the test, says the Lord of hosts; see if I will not open the windows of heaven for you and pour down for you an overflowing blessing.'" (Malachi 3:8-10)

"Give, and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over, will be put into your lap; for the measure you give will be the measure you get back." (Luke 6:38)

"For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son." (John 3:16)

"The one who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and the one who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. Each of you must give as you have made up your mind, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver." (2 Corinthians 9:6-7)

Reflection Statement: *"'Extravagant' does not correspond with giving that is merely dutiful, required, burdensome, mandated, or simply doing one's part. 'Extravagant' denotes a style and attitude of giving that is unexpectedly joyous, without predetermined limits, from the heart, extraordinary, over-the-top, and propelled by great passion. Extravagant is the generosity seen in those who appreciate the beauty of giving, the awe and Joy of making a difference for the purposes of Christ. Extravagant Generosity is giving to God as God has given to us."* P. 133 (**Five Practices of Fruitful Living**; Robert Schnase)

Think of this for a moment: everything you are, that you have, that you enjoy, came from God. Now ask yourself; if what you give is a reflection of your gratitude, what does it say about how grateful you are? If God loves a cheerful giver – how cheerful are you? Does your giving match God's lavish love for you?

Focus questions (Answer one a day or as time allows):

1. In your own words, how would you define or explain *generosity*? What is the difference you see between the act of giving and the characteristic of generosity?

2. As Christians, what should be our motivation for showing generosity? What motivates you? What does your giving reveal about your relationship with God – is it trusting or suspicious? How can you become more open and giving?

3. In the early church, extravagance was described as selling all the possessions of the community and giving to the widows, orphans, sick, and poor. What might Extravagant Generosity look like today—in your life, our church, our community, and beyond? And how can we make this an expectation of every member?

4. What can you do to make joyful giving a vital part of your life – how could you become a model of generosity for others to emulate? Who first taught you to give? Who modeled generosity for you? And how are you passing on those lessons?

5. How do you feel about the tithing? Do you practice proportionate giving? If so, why? If not, why not? What obstacles prevent you from giving extravagantly?

6. What is your response to the statement; "all things belong to God?"

Closing Prayer: *O God, we have received your extravagant generosity through the gift of your Son, Jesus Christ. Help us to show generosity to others remembering that we have received all that we are and have through your grace – and through your Son. Teach us to trust you so that we might become a person who practices Extravagant Generosity as I reach out to more and more people in your Name – not for my own selfish pride, Lord, but for your glory alone. Amen.*

If you have any questions that might have been raised by this study, please feel free to contact me – Rev. Geoff Ross – by phone at 892-2839 or by email at geoffrey.ross@pei.aibn.com.

Reminder: Each Wednesday there will be a Being Fruitful Brown-bag Lunch Discussion group in the Parlour from 12:00-1:00 – all are welcome!

Being Fruitful: Practicing Extravagant Generosity

Study/Reflection sheet for Week 5: Nov. 21, 2010

What You'll need: A Bible; A Copy of the book **Five Practices of Fruitful Living** (available at the Maritime Christian Book Room); A Pen; And 15 minutes a day!

What You'll need to do: Read these passages aloud. Take the time to look them up and place them into context. Then spend a minute or two reflecting on what you've read: write down your thoughts if you need to; ask questions of the text – or of yourself and current practice; then let these thoughts percolate through your mind or heart for the rest of the day.

Reflection Texts:

"Honour the LORD with your substance and with the first fruits of all your produce." (Proverbs 3:9)

"Will anyone rob God? Yet you are robbing me! But you say, 'How are we robbing you? In your tithes and offerings! You are cursed with a curse, for you are robbing me...! Bring the full tithe into the storehouse ...and put me to the test, says the Lord of hosts; see if I will not open the windows of heaven for you and pour down for you an overflowing blessing.'" (Malachi 3:8-10)

"Give, and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over, will be put into your lap; for the measure you give will be the measure you get back." (Luke 6:38)

"For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son." (John 3:16)

"The one who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and the one who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. Each of you must give as you have made up your mind, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver." (2 Corinthians 9:6-7)

Reflection Statement: *"'Extravagant' does not correspond with giving that is merely dutiful, required, burdensome, mandated, or simply doing one's part. 'Extravagant' denotes a style and attitude of giving that is unexpectedly joyous, without predetermined limits, from the heart, extraordinary, over-the-top, and propelled by great passion. Extravagant is the generosity seen in those who appreciate the beauty of giving, the awe and Joy of making a difference for the purposes of Christ. Extravagant Generosity is giving to God as God has given to us."* P. 133 (**Five Practices of Fruitful Living**; Robert Schnase)

Think of this for a moment: everything you are, that you have, that you enjoy, came from God. Now ask yourself; if what you give is a reflection of your gratitude, what does it say about how grateful you are? If God loves a cheerful giver – how cheerful are you? Does your giving match God's lavish love for you?

Focus questions (Answer one a day or as time allows):

1. In your own words, how would you define or explain *generosity*? What is the difference you see between the act of giving and the characteristic of generosity?

2. As Christians, what should be our motivation for showing generosity? What motivates you? What does your giving reveal about your relationship with God – is it trusting or suspicious? How can you become more open and giving?

3. In the early church, extravagance was described as selling all the possessions of the community and giving to the widows, orphans, sick, and poor. What might Extravagant Generosity look like today—in your life, our church, our community, and beyond? And how can we make this an expectation of every member?

4. What can you do to make joyful giving a vital part of your life – how could you become a model of generosity for others to emulate? Who first taught you to give? Who modeled generosity for you? And how are you passing on those lessons?

5. How do you feel about the tithing? Do you practice proportionate giving? If so, why? If not, why not? What obstacles prevent you from giving extravagantly?

6. What is your response to the statement; "all things belong to God?"

Closing Prayer: *O God, we have received your extravagant generosity through the gift of your Son, Jesus Christ. Help us to show generosity to others remembering that we have received all that we are and have through your grace – and through your Son. Teach us to trust you so that we might become a person who practices Extravagant Generosity as I reach out to more and more people in your Name – not for my own selfish pride, Lord, but for your glory alone. Amen.*

If you have any questions that might have been raised by this study, please feel free to contact me – Rev. Geoff Ross – by phone at 892-2839 or by email at geoffrey.ross@pei.aibn.com.

Reminder: Each Wednesday there will be a Being Fruitful Brown-bag Lunch Discussion group in the Parlour from 12:00-1:00 – all are welcome!